relationship with phenomena; both possess alert and capable sensibilities. Each receives an impression that is partly prompted by an involuntary act of his flesh and partly from without. The romantic imagination may be busily alluring, but it is virginal, awaiting an annunciation or fertilizing inspiration. The imagination deals with these impressions, organizing, analyzing, and generalizing them, by means of past art: the classical songs and myths of Sicily for the faun, religious art and hymns and Renaissance poetry for Stephen.

The dream is obviously of central importance in harmonizing the duality of experience and memory as well as various memories that otherwise have no connections. In its intensity, it dissolves time and is the best evidence of the purely imaginative character of true reality. Romantic perception lies not alone in the object but also in the mind of the perceiver. The artist's experience is not mystical. The dream remains; the song then is necessarily about desire. Stephen and the faun must be content with their songs as objective perception of truth.

Angela Habermann
McGill University

T. S. Pillai's *Chemmeen*: Love, Marxism, and a Hindu Dialectic

Chemmeen[1] is set in a small fishing village in Kerala, India. As stated in the "Introduction," poverty of the degree one finds here will be difficult for most in the Western world to imagine. In such regions, the prayer "May my children not know starvation" is literally meant and earnestly uttered. The story is of Karuthamma and Pareekutti, she the daughter of a poor fisherman, and he the son of a fairly successful trader. With adolescence, their friendship turns to love, and Chemban Kunju (Karuthamma's father), preferring not to look too closely into Pareekutti's motivation, asks for and receives substantial help from him. The young man goes bankrupt while Chemban, purchasing his first boat and nets, is on the way to comparative wealth. Karuthamma is given in marriage to a visiting fisherman, Palani, and goes to live in his village. Chemban had bought his first boat from Kandankoran, a man of higher "caste" whom Chemban admired for his wealth, bearing and somewhat extravagant life-style. Chemban's wife dies and so does Kandankoran: thereupon, the aspiring fisherman marries the widow. But the marriage is not a success; Chemban's health and drive falter, and his enterprise declines. His only other child, a daughter, estranged over her father's second marriage, moves out of the house. Chemban, his life now in ruins, without aims and orientation, belatedly repays a small portion of the money he had borrowed from Pareekutti. But the money now has no use to Pareekutti either: he is given to haunting the beach alone, singing, his sanity suspect. Pareekutti walks to Karuthamma's village, presumably to give her the money forced upon him by her father. When he arrives, it is late in the night and Palani is out at sea. Love compounded with great pity overcomes Karuthamma's moral conditioning. "She entered his extended arms and her body became one with his . . . 'My Karuthamma! . . . What am I to you?' She took his face in both her hands and looking at him with half-closed eyes, she said, 'Everything . . .' " Out at sea, Palani struggles with a huge shark he has baited and looks in vain for Arundhati (guiding star of fisherman and symbol of

[1]Reference is to the Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) edition, 1978. Translated into English by Narayana Menon.

chastity) as a giant whirlpool forms and waves become mountainous. He cries out to his wife (the fisherman's traditional guardian angel) to pray for him: "The lives of the men at sea are in the hands of the women on shore." The primordial fisherman, on a piece of wood, had escaped because ashore "a chaste and pure woman" had prayed steadfastly for the safety of her husband at sea (pp. 7-8). But Karuthamma is in the arms of Pareekutti, and Palani is dragged down to the abode of Katalamma, the sea goddess. The lovers by the sea are swept out and drowned by an outraged ocean.

One familiar with the history of India, and with the racial and religious tensions between Hindus and Muslims, will grasp the significance of Pareekutti being Muslim and Karuthamma a Hindu. Like Romeo and Juliet, the lovers are young: Karuthamma was about thirteen, if not less, at the time of her marriage. Custom demanded that a girl marry at ten (p. 29) in order to exclude the danger of her being attracted to an "unacceptable" man. Added to the racial and religious divisions, Pareekutti represents a trading, exploitative class, separate from the fishermen who lead a hard and dangerous life. The force of their love, comparable to the elements by which they live, gives Pareekutti and Karuthamma a stature which transcends their youth and humble social position. Between the innocent and joyful beginning of their love and its "sinful" end are worked out patterns of violations. Karuthamma loves Pareekutti and acknowledges that she will always remember him. But loyal to her traditions and obedient to her parents, she did not declare and assert her love for Pareekutti—a man outside her race and religion. Tragically, not even marriage and "the fulfilment of desire" (p. 121) can drive away her deep love for Pareekutti. In conforming, in attempting to avoid trouble and shame, Karuthamma violates the love Pareekutti and she have for each other—and creates greater scandal and fatal chaos.

Young and obedient, Karuthamma was unable until the end to escape from the "fort" and the "high walls" erected by her parents and her community. But her father, though enjoining and enforcing traditional, conservative behavior on his two daughters, is himself individualistic, iconoclastic, and does not abide by those customs and beliefs which stand in the way of his attempts to improve his economic lot. The community believed that a fisherman should not practice thrift because he "makes his money by cheating and catching innocent beings moving freely in the sea . . . you cannot save money made at the cost of innocent lives" (p. 132). But Chemban rejects beliefs which result in stagnation, poverty, and vulnerability: he saves, refusing to be consigned to permanent penury. Only those of the Valakkaran "caste" are permitted to buy fishing boats (the lower castes can only seek employment in them), but Chemban does so, though he belongs to the so-called lower, Mukkuran caste. When the sea turns red and other fishermen stay ashore believing that the sea goddess (Katalamma) is menstruating, Chemban launches his boat. His lead is cautiously followed by some, and thus the fishing community begins to alters its patterns of behavior, if not of belief. Chemban is a catalyst releasing dynamic forces of change.

But his actions pass beyond legitimate self-improvement and become an expression of unscrupulous greed. In order to accumulate wealth, Chemban would even "empty the sea" (p. 71). When his daughter attempts to collect "cast-off small fish which children usually gather for themselves," Chemban violently pushes her away. "The haul he had in his boat had grown in the sea. No one had sown any seeds for it or nurtured it. A portion of it was the due of the poor . . . That was the law of the sea" (p. 53). Having borrowed heavily from Pareekutti, Chemban neither repays nor offers the young trader a part of the day's catch. As Karuthamma observes, purity does not mean sexual chastity only: "Won't the sea goddess be angry if you cheat?" Chemban violates friendship by denying his loyal friend Achankunju a place in the boat. He violates parental duty by placing the purchase of a

boat higher than seeing to it that his daughter gets married. The novel opens with Pareekutti and Karuthamma laughing helplessly and without apparent cause: it is the excitement of adolescence and incipient sexual attraction. Karuthamma wears only a thin loincloth and her breasts are bare (p. 5). Chemban, by neglecting his parental duty, allows this friendship to transform itself into love.

T. S. Pillai, who was associated with the socialist movement in Kerala, portrays through Chemban the powerful attractions of money and the ruthless, competitive nature that the free enterprise system sometimes breeds. Here Pillai can be compared with African writers such as Sembene Ousmane and Ngugi—if not with Conrad and the corrupting attractions of wealth on Nostromo. Despite the pleas of his neighbors (whose predicament had once been his) Chemban sells *all* his catch to the traders. Consequently, the women have to buy the fish from the traders at high prices and then attempt to sell them, barely making a margin of profit for themselves. Chemban thus rejects his past and his people, and instead collaborates with the exploiters. Like the traders and moneylenders, at times of economic distress, Chemban buys ornaments and household goods from his desperate neighbors at outrageously low prices. *Chemmeen* examines the nature of communal beliefs and the degree to which man could—and perhaps should—stand outside society as an individual. Chemban, breaking free in the pursuit of what at first appears to be legitimate goals, becomes selfish and pitiless. His rebellion against custom has a material motivation; a private rather than a public goal. He does not break free in order to improve the community's quality of life. Indifferent to his people's plight, he pursues personal aggrandisement and ends a lonely, bitter, and deranged man. The moral is clear: the answers to superstition, stagnation and poverty must be collectively sought and achieved.

To turn to another dimension of the novel and to its title, as the shrimps (chemmeen) are tossed on the waves of the ocean, so man is tossed on the waves of the Ocean of Transmigration (*Samsara Sagara*). The tragic end places man in the Shakespearean perspective of flies to wanton gods but counterpoised to this awareness is the realization that god in one of his ten *avataras* (incarnations) took the form of a fish. Thus man is defined paradoxically both as negligible and as of profound significance. Like the waves, man repeatedly dies and arises in unceasing combinations of new forms. *The Bhagavad Gita* identifies greed as one of the gates leading to hell—the path Chemban chooses. On the other hand, *The Gita* also warns that man attains salvation not through renunciation alone, nor by leaving works undone. Palani carries out the work "pre-scribed" (ordained) for him with courage and skill but, unlike his father-in-law, liberated from and untainted by greed. *The Gita* also posits two time-pathways, the one identified with the gods and leading to solar formless spheres from where there is no return to the lower worlds of name and form (*Nama-rupa*); the other, identified with the ancestors and leading by waning moon to the sublunar spheres of the unrest of forms, returning to fresh lives of ever new becoming. Thus Palani's body is not washed ashore while those of Pareekutti and Karuthamma are—locked in embrace since they symbolize, even in death, the principle and process of continual creation and birth. Their love also symbolizes the desire to realize the primordial, cosmic union of Shiva and Shakti. *Shiva Purana* not only praises Shiva as "manifested light" but also says that Shiva and Devi (or Shakti) are identical and inseparable as moonlight from the moon. So it is that Pareekutti and Karuthamma consummate their long-denied love by moonlight (p. 215).

Chemmeen is not only a story of tragic, young love, but raises issues of individual morality and action; economic conduct; social cohesion and theological belief.

C. P. Sarvan
University of Zambia